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St. Malo Provincial Park

Draft Management Plan



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1. Introduction

The *Provincial Parks Act* (1993) requires that a management plan be prepared for each provincial park. Management plans establish long-term direction for parks and address issues pertaining to resource protection, use and development. The process of preparing this draft management plan and co-ordinating the public involvement process is the responsibility of a team involving staff from Parks and Natural Areas branch, regional staff of Manitoba Conservation and Water Stewardship and a consultant contracted to work on the project.

The treaty and Aboriginal rights of Aboriginal peoples to pursue traditional uses and activities within St. Malo Provincial Park are acknowledged and respected.

The management plan for St. Malo Provincial Park will be based on its role in Manitoba's System Plan for Provincial Parks and on the participation of those who use and care about the park. The first step in preparing this management plan was to review the current operation of the park, based on its attributes, history of use and the knowledge of staff operating and managing the park. Information collected through that process was used to prepare a draft plan. The next step is to provide opportunities for public input. Involving park users is an important part of preparing the management plan. Public input will be collected primarily through the Manitoba Parks website and at a public drop-in session at the park. The plan will then be finalized based on planning objectives and any new information received.

2. Park History

St. Malo Provincial Park has been a popular recreation area for many years. The park is located on a reservoir known as St. Malo Lake, created by the construction of the Rat River dam by the Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Administration in 1959. The Rat River flows into the reservoir from the southeast and exits heading westward towards the Red River. The dam was built to control the flow and availability of water for nearby communities. The resulting reservoir had the additional benefit of creating a "lake" that is suitable for recreational use. The construction of the dam led to the designation of St. Malo Provincial Park on the northern shore of the reservoir in 1961.

3. Park Attributes

St. Malo Provincial Park is located roughly 50 kilometres south of Winnipeg, next to the town of St. Malo. The park is 148.35 hectares (approximately 1.5 square kilometres) in size.

3.1 Natural

St. Malo Provincial Park is located on the eastern edge of Manitoba's Tall Grass Prairie Natural Region. The park landscape is a mix of aspen/oak forest and native remnant tall grass prairie. The main tree species include trembling aspen, bur oak and balsam poplar. These grow alongside a variety of shrub species such as dogwood, poison ivy, downy arrowwood, high bush-cranberry, American hazel and hawthorn. Later in the summer, berry pickers enjoy the harvest of wild plums, chokecherries and saskatoons.

St. Malo Provincial Park provides habitat for the western silvery aster, a species that is listed as Threatened under *Manitoba's Endangered Species Act* (1990) and *Canada's Species at Risk Act* (2002) (Conservation Data Centre, 2012). Other unique flowers that grow in the park include lady slippers and other orchids. In the summer, prairie wildflowers including buttercups, crowfoot violets and three-flowered avens, may be seen. Work is underway to maintain the remnant tall grass prairie site. The prairie has been burned to mimic the wildfires that were once a normal part of the prairie ecology.

Leafy spurge is an invasive weed that has been found in the park and that has the potential to negatively impact the park's native species.

The park is home to a variety of bird species, including red-tailed, broad-winged and cooper's hawks, as well as the red-eyed vireo and other songbirds. From spring to early summer, the drumming sound of the male ruffed grouse engaged in courting behaviour may be heard. The park also provides habitat for bats in the summer, as well as snapping turtles.



3.2 Recreational

Visitors to St. Malo Provincial Park can choose from a variety of recreational activities including swimming, sunbathing, fishing, canoeing and kayaking, sail-boarding, hiking, cycling, and participating in interpretive activities. The park provides a range of recreational facilities that offer a high level of service and convenience. Developed campground bays, beaches and day use areas give the park a natural looking but somewhat modified landscape. The Canada Shipping Act (2001) prohibits the use of powerboats on the reservoir, providing canoeists and boardsailers with calm waters and a sense of peace and quiet that is not found on many other busy lakes.

Park facilities include a campground, two unsupervised beaches, beach volleyball courts, picnic shelters, trails, a privately operated concession and miniature golf course, playgrounds, a boat launch and dock, and modern and non-modern washrooms. The campground is one of the largest in the provincial park system and includes sites nestled within the forested area of the park as well as along the shore of the reservoir. St. Malo offers both nightly and seasonal campsites as well as three small group camping areas.

In total there are roughly 450 campsites providing a mix of basic and electric service. The campground is open from mid-May to early September and experiences high levels of occupancy. In terms of visitation St. Malo has the second busiest campground in the provincial park system, averaging almost 200,000 visitors per year.

The park's trails are popular for hiking and cycling in the summer. They are suitable for those with a novice skill-level and are appropriate for family use. The 1.6 kilometre Tallgrass Parkland Self-guiding Trail opened in 2004 and offers park users the opportunity to explore aspen/oak forest and tall grass prairie remnants. The Trans Canada Trail also runs through the park, entering on the east side and exiting on the west.

St. Malo Provincial Park has had an interpretation program since 2000. The program, which includes campfire talks, guided hikes and amphitheatre programs, provides visitors with opportunities to learn about the natural and cultural history of the park. Programs are interpreter-led and are available for the public as well as school groups.

3.3 Cultural/Heritage

The history of St. Malo Provincial Park is associated with the arrival of French-Canadians who settled in the St. Malo area in the 1870s and established communities that continue to thrive today. Lake St. Malo, the reservoir on which the park is located, was created through the construction of the Rat River dam, an earth-fill structure over 450 metres long with a maximum height of approximately 13 metres and a top width of approximately six metres. Today, visitors to the park can view the dam and accompanying dyke. Interpretive signage located nearby provides information on the history of the structure.

3.4 Additional Features

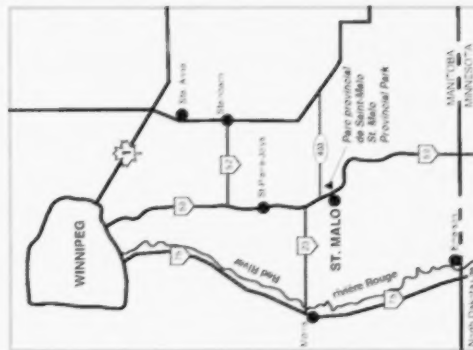
St. Malo is a bilingual park where services are provided in both English and French.

Park visitors are served by a variety of commercial services. Three businesses operate in the park under separate lease agreements. One lease allows for the operation of the food concession and miniature golf facility on a site located north of the main beach which is on the northwest side of the lake; the second is for a fuel wood concession; and the third is for a water-based equipment rental concession, through which park users can rent non-motorized boats such as canoes and pedal boats from a site located in between the main beach and the dyke.

The Friends of St. Malo Provincial Park is a non-profit organization that partners with Manitoba under an ongoing co-operating agreement. In its mission statement, the group is committed to the conservation, enhancement and ecological preservation of St. Malo Provincial Park to the benefit of the park and its users.

St. Malo Provincial Park is also used as a venue for a variety of special events. Examples of events that have taken place in the park include national and provincial sporting events, such as cycling and triathlon races, and regional/community events such as the annual winter St. Malo Festival of Friends.

Primary access to the park is limited to the main access road from PTH 59 and the TransCanada trail on the east boundary. Over the years, private lands surrounding the park have been developed in a variety of ways, creating pressure to establish additional access points into the park.



4. Park Management Framework

4.1 Classification

Manitoba's Provincial Park System is made up of almost 100 different parks and park reserves. Each of these areas plays a role in conserving ecosystems, preserving natural, cultural or heritage resources, and providing outdoor recreation or educational experiences. Classification descriptions can be found in Appendix A.

St. Malo Provincial Park is classified as a Recreation Park. The main purpose of a recreation park, as defined in The Provincial Parks Act (1993), is to provide recreational opportunities.

4.2 Park Purpose

Manitoba's provincial park system was established to conserve ecosystems and maintain biodiversity; to preserve unique and representative natural, cultural and heritage resources; and to provide outdoor recreational and educational opportunities in a natural setting. Within this larger framework, individual parks contribute towards the overall objective of the provincial park system.

A System Plan for Manitoba's Provincial Parks (1997) states that the purpose of St. Malo Provincial Park is to provide outdoor recreational opportunities and experiences in a natural setting in southeastern Manitoba. The park will:

- accommodate a serviced campground and picnicking areas
- provide beach and swimming opportunities
- serve as a day-use area capable of accommodating large groups
- provide interpretive programs that include campfires, guided hikes, amphitheatre, family, and children's programs highlighting the park's natural and cultural history



4.3 Land Use Categories

Land Use Categories (LUCs) identify the important attributes of broad areas within a provincial park. Land may be categorized in Wilderness, Backcountry, Resource Use, Recreational Development, Heritage or Access LUCs. LUC descriptions can be found in Appendix A.

All of the land comprising St. Malo Provincial Park has been categorized as a Recreational Development LUC. The main purpose of this categorization is to accommodate recreational development.

5. Park Management Guidelines

The following guidelines will direct future park management actions in St. Malo Provincial Park.

5.1 Natural Values

1. The park will be maintained as a natural-looking area. Site modifications in undeveloped portions of the park will be minimal.
2. When species-at-risk are found in the park, negative impacts associated with park use will be minimized or avoided.
3. The tall grass prairie site will be managed to maintain the health and extent of the prairie and to prevent encroachment from surrounding vegetation.

5.2 Recreation

1. The current extent of recreational development in the park will be maintained. Park use will focus on a large campground with varying degrees of service.
2. Recreational use of the spillway will not be permitted.
3. The trail system in the park will be managed for activities such as hiking and cycling at a novice skill level.
4. Interpretive information that reflects the park's natural, cultural and historical values will be provided through live interpretive programming, signs and other materials.
5. The development of improved access points from lands surrounding the park will not be permitted and unauthorized access points will be closed.
6. The park boundary will be managed to help maintain adequate separation between park facilities and adjacent lands.
7. The upgrade or expansion of commercial services in the park will be limited to the current commercial lease sites. No new sites will be allocated for commercial development.
8. Manitoba will work with the Friends of St. Malo and the local community on projects that are consistent with the park's purpose.

6. Implementation

This management plan will be reviewed in 10 to 15 years, or as may be required. The management plan is to be used in conjunction with park directives and departmental and government policies.



Appendix A

Park Classification and Land Use Categories

Park Classifications

In accordance with section 7(2) of *The Provincial Parks Act* (1993), all provincial parks are classified as one of the following types:

- (a) a wilderness park, if the main purpose of the designation is to preserve representative areas of a natural region;
- (b) a natural park, if the main purpose of the designation is both to preserve areas of a natural region and to accommodate a diversity of recreational opportunities and resource uses;
- (c) a recreation park, if the main purpose of the designation is to provide recreational opportunities;
- (d) a heritage park, if the main purpose of the designation is to preserve an area of land containing a resource or resources of cultural or heritage value;
- (e) any other type of provincial park that may be specified in the regulation.

Land Use Categories

In accordance with section 7(3) of *The Provincial Parks Act* (1993), all provincial parks are categorized into one or more of the following land use categories:

- (a) a wilderness category, if the main purpose of the categorization is to protect representative or unique natural landscapes in an undisturbed state and provide recreational opportunities that depend on a pristine environment;
- (b) a backcountry category, if the main purpose of the categorization is to protect examples of natural landscapes and provide basic facilities and trails for nature-oriented recreation in a largely undisturbed environment;
- (c) a resource management category, if the main purpose of the categorization is to permit commercial resource development or extraction in a manner that does not compromise the main purpose of the park classification;
- (d) a recreational development category, if the main purpose of the categorization is to accommodate recreational development;
- (e) a heritage category, if the main purpose of the categorization is to protect a unique or representative site containing a resource or resources of cultural or heritage value;
- (f) an access category, if the main purpose of the categorization is to provide a point or route of access in a provincial park or a location for a lodge and associated facilities;
- (g) any other category that may be specified in the regulation.

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